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by John P. Sisk

Sholokov's Survival
by Bruce A. Cook

America's Sainte-Beuve
by Edward P. J. Corbett

Extra-Literary Criticism
by Thomas F. Curley

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THE
Commonweal
A Weekly Review of Public Affairs, Literature, and the Arts
THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR OF PUBLICATION

week by week

A COMPLEX TASK

DEVELOPMENTS have linked the destiny of South Korea with that of Turkey for the second time within the past decade. Here are two peoples of markedly different traditions, separated by the thousands of miles of the Sino-Soviet land mass, again brought together during the cold war struggle. In the savage Korean War the Turkish units in the U.N. forces stood out in their effectiveness against the North Korean and Chinese Communist invaders. And the Turks who were taken prisoners withstood Chinese brainwashing to a man. Now Turkish students, imbued with a comparable anti-Communism but spurred on by news of the successful anti-Rhee demonstrations, have been rising in organized protest against the harsh suppression of political opposition by the Menderes regime.

Perhaps no special link was required for one such popular protest to lead to another. Today word of revolt travels fast; it meets with sympathetic reception by any oppressed people. The cumulative impact, for example, as one country after another in Africa attains political emancipation, must be considerable. It gives hope to the disinherited and shackled the world over.

That is one context under which recent happenings in Korea and Turkey should be regarded. Another is the relationship of such developments to the cold war. If South Korea was to be strengthened sufficiently, old repressive methods had to be modified; the new government which the National Assembly has promised will need to allow far freer play to opposition parties and minority groups to respond to the present-day aspirations of the people. This was one reason that Secretary Herter spoke out, and that our ambassador in Seoul made the strongest representations to Mr. Rhee in person. Foreign reaction to our intervention has proved quite favorable on the whole. It is widely acclaimed in South Korea.

But Turkey presents a sharply contrasting situation. The Turks are fiercely independent. The large and estimable Turkish army serves as a bulwark of national defense. Neither our two billions in economic aid nor our joint plans for the common defense would provide a pretext for American intervention even if we were so inclined. And Turkey, rather than Korea, presents the typical obstacles to United States intervention in the affairs of allied and neutral nations.

ON THE other hand, as leader of the free-world opposition to the advance of Communism the United States is vitally interested in building and maintaining power to resist throughout the world. When South Vietnam faces renewed terrorist infiltration, our country will do all it can to shore up the brave efforts of beleaguered President Ngo. It will also continue massive aid to the new, more democratic South Korean government. It will help the authoritarian Menderes government in its historic role of defending the Dardanelles from Russian encroachment. But how many governments strike a good balance between firm anti-Communism and an acceptable minimum of civil rights?

Non-intervention has to be the order of the day in other lands, where Communism threatens from within rather than from immediate armed invasions. America needs to strengthen these nations by other than military means. The agreement just concluded with India to double our grain shipments and provide stocks of foodstuffs for future emergencies supplies an outstanding example. Pakistan has now announced an end of rationing for the first time, another result of American aid.

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In some ways the problem of defense is most difficult of all in lands farthest removed from any foreseeable armed conflict. In Africa and Latin America resentment over extremes of wealth and poverty in this technological age is growing. If the economies of the other Americas—which are so tied in with our own—are to be developed along democratic lines, there must be wholesale land reform. This is a domestic matter and, vital as it is, one on which the United States cannot intervene directly. Secretary Herter went about as far as he could in the way of a public pronouncement when he recently recommended a study of the crucial Latin American agrarian problem to the Organization of American States.

One other factor supplies a key to the whole situation. If defense against Communism is approached primarily as a holding action, such a policy is foredoomed to failure. It is all too easy as it is to identify the United States and the European colonial powers with the status quo, with all its injustice, deprivation and human exploitation. As the Chilean university students declared in their open letter to President Eisenhower, published a month ago in these pages: "If the injustice obtaining today is all that Christianity or democracy have to offer on this continent, no one should be surprised that the more educated sons of these downtrodden people should seek in Communism those elementary goods which are now lacking and which are required by morality and civilization. . . ."

It appears inescapable that if Communist pressure is to be successfully withstood in many lands, it must be through positive means and indirectly. To attain their objective, our foreign aid programs have to be conceived primarily in terms of various national needs.

WHO IS THE BIGOT?

SINCE IT IS possible to find people who will defend anything, a search could probably turn up some few people who are in favor of bigotry. But most people declare themselves opposed to bigotry as they do to sin and prejudice. As with sin and prejudice, most people find it easier to discover bigotry in others than to see it in themselves. The present Presidential campaign is a case in point. Almost every commentator feels called upon to disavow and condemn bigotry—sometimes even as he raises and answers questions that others would describe as bigoted.

It is usually difficult and seldom helpful to label even outrageous statements as bigotry. Catholics have frequently been told, as they were recently by the Rev. Dr. Eugene Carson Blake and Bishop G. Bromley Oxnam, that "Protestants deeply resent the tendency of some Catholics to accuse them of 'bigotry' whenever they act out of sincere religious and political convictions." This quotation is from an article "A Protestant View of a Catholic for President," which they contributed to *Look* magazine. If, in this quotation, the words "Catholics" and "Protestants" are interchanged the statement is equally meaningful; but if the article is read in the light of the revised statement, several unexpected attitudes are revealed.

The authors of the article write, for example, that "every good American [should] govern his vote without private religious tests. There is no room in the United States for people who try to make any American a second-class citizen by reason of his creed or color." On this basis they are not opposed to Catholics as mayors, senators or governors, positions many Catholics now hold. But when asked how they feel about a Catholic as President their answer is "uneasy."

When asked to say why they would be uneasy, they reply: "We worry about how a Catholic President could square his political duties with the 'official' position of the church to which he owes allegiance, on questions that range from the use of public funds for parochial schools, or the rights of Americans to birth-control information, to such larger political issues as the separation of church and state and the conduct of foreign affairs." These are significant issues, but to encounter once again questions which the leading Catholic candidate has repeatedly and clearly answered is a dispiriting experience. Nor is one reassured by the "one simple problem" which the two authors choose to dwell on.

They point out that a "Protestant President is perfectly free to participate in the religious services of any other faith. He can cooperate in the many interfaith activities that have been built up so carefully over the years." But since a Catholic cannot actively participate in non-Catholic worship they see a problem. It must be stated that at least some Catholic editors see no problem here. If interfaith activities have been carefully built up over the years, we presume they do not exclude Catholics. And if Catholics who are not Presidents can participate we see no reason why a Catholic President would have a problem.

Beyond this, however, we *do* see a simple problem which it seems the two authors have not faced.

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If there were interfaith activities which a President could not attend because of sincere religious convictions, would it not be the course of political wisdom to change the nature of the activity rather than to exclude from office an entire religious group? And would not a deep concern for religious liberty suggest the same response?

The "one simple problem" these authors have discussed is that which was developed more nakedly in an ad which recently appeared in West Virginia. "Who is the bigot?" the ad asked, and went on: "A candidate for the Presidency believes it is a mortal sin for him to worship with a faith other than his own. A voter votes against him on account of this belief. Who is the bigot?" The voter was then asked to check one of the following: "Candidate, voter, both, neither." This is clearly a religious, not a political test. As such it is reprehensible. It does not become more respectable by being couched in more sophisticated terms. Unfortunately one does not declare a moratorium on bigotry merely by eschewing the term, however piously. It is the thing itself that must be avoided. This is admittedly a more difficult task, as the continuing religious-political debate sadly attests.

EXIT MR. CONNOLE

PRESIDENT EISENHOWER, as everyone knows but hardly anybody mentions these days, rode into office as the leader of a great "crusade," pledged among other things to "clean up the mess in Washington." The corruption which has been revealed in his own Administration has turned out to be, as even the most sympathetic observers must admit, unfortunately widespread; and yet, amazingly, Mr. Eisenhower seems to feel not the slightest sense of embarrassment, not to mention culpability, in the face of this phenomenon.

Presidential appointees who have been discovered in situations involving "conflicts of interest" have disappeared from the Washington scene with remarkable regularity, averaging about two or three a year for the seven-year period of Mr. Eisenhower's incumbency. Most notable of the members of the Eisenhower "team" who left under a cloud were Secretary of the Air Force Talbott (1955), Assistant Secretary of Defense Ross (1957), Assistant to the President Sherman Adams (1958), F.C.C. Commissioner Mack (1958), F.C.C. Commissioner Doerfer (1960); F.P.C. Chairman Kuykendall is now facing Congressional investigation.

As this abbreviated list suggests, the President has had his greatest difficulty, so far as bad publicity is concerned, with his appointments to the federal regulatory agencies. In fact, the recent malodorous revelations of "conflicts of interest" in these agencies have prompted Congressional threats of drastic legislative action if the agencies did not "police" themselves. In this context, the actions—and statements—of the President in regard to the re-appointment of F.P.C. Commissioner William R. Connole become extraordinary on several counts.

Mr. Connole has distinguished himself on the F.P.C. as a champion—the sole champion, incidentally—of consumer interests. He has many times dissented from his colleagues' rulings in favor of the utility companies, and in two major cases his dissents against the size of gas rate increases granted by the majority were upheld by the Supreme Court. Mr. Connole has been endorsed by citizens' groups, consumer organizations, several mayors and officials of state regulatory agencies. He is, not unexpectedly, looked on with disfavor by representatives of the utilities companies.

Recently the word got out in Washington that the President would not reappoint Mr. Connole, and a storm of protest arose from interested people and groups. Under the circumstances, with the unhappy reports about more complaisant federal commissioners hardly departed from the front pages, one might have expected the President to walk softly. Instead, he indicated only incomprehension and resentment at the criticism. Asked why he was not reappointing Mr. Connole at his recent press conference, Mr. Eisenhower became "visibly irritated," and retorted, "I think I can get a better man, that's all."

The President's anger, which has increasingly become his response to criticism and even questioning, is amazing. What is even more amazing is that his "That's all" has already prevailed in a good number of the nation's newspapers. Long live the king, it seems, and the king can do no wrong.

THE SCARS OF HISTORY

MUCH HAS been written in recent months about Protestant-Catholic relations; comparatively little attention has been paid to Christian-Jewish relations. In one sense this emphasis is logical enough. Numerically, Catholics and Protestants far outnumber Jews. More importantly, a theological dialogue between Protestants and Catholics is possible in a way that is not possible between Jews and Christians.

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Nonetheless, there are many areas of common concern to Christians and Jews which require better understanding. Leaving aside questions of theological dialogue, on matters of public policy sharp differences of viewpoint frequently arise on which better understanding between groups is essential. The recent outbreaks of anti-Semitism around the world simply underscore this need for communication and improved Christian-Jewish understanding.

Even when good will is present, however, understanding is not easily come by—a fact which was emphasized for us by an article called "In the Cardinal's Parlor," which appeared in the April 1 issue of the *Reconstructionist,* published by the Jewish Reconstructionist Foundation. The Cardinal in question is Cardinal Spellman; the author is a Jew who had been invited to lunch to discuss "the difficulties which had arisen in Israel-Catholic relations."

Despite its title, only the first four paragraphs of this article are actually about the author's lunch with Cardinal Spellman. He comes, he shakes hands with the Cardinal, he is offended when a Monsignor kisses the Cardinal's ring. The rest of the three-page article is a flashback to the author's boyhood in the Ukraine.

As a boy, the author was one of six Jews permitted to attend the local school, "the first time in my life that I was in non-Jewish company." The head of the Gymnasia was a layman but in the eyes of the Jewish writer he had "the clean-shaven face of a preacher or a Jesuit priest: thin, intellectual features, solemn, unsmiling, even severe." For the ceremonial opening of the school the local Bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church was present, a man with a large cross hanging under his long beard and with a larger one in his hands. The Bishop began to lead the group in prayer, and everyone knelt—everyone except the nine-year-old boy who was to write this piece many years later.

The school's director motioned to the boy to kneel: "I could almost hear the angry voice of that hand: 'Get down on your knees, you little Jew. How dare you mar this hour of our consecration and devotion? You should be happy and eternally grateful that we have admitted you into our midst. Kneel, kneel, kneel!' "

But through the boy's mind went other pictures: "I saw the Jews in Spain who preferred to be burnt alive by the Inquisition rather than swear allegiance to the Cross." He remembered hearing of a pogrom in town when he was only three years old, in which "a wild mob of peasants, artisans and riff-raff, led by a priest, pillaged, robbed and burnt Jewish homes. . . . These pogromists believed in the Cross, didn't they? And now I was supposed to kneel before that Cross. . . ."

The boy did not kneel, and he never forgot the incident. "In later years, there were many occasions when I had to face the angry hand of authority ordering me to do this or do that. Whenever the orders conflicted with my conscience or self-respect, I have remained standing on my feet."

No one, we think, could read this account of an unforgettable incident in the life of a Jewish boy in Czarist Russia without being moved. But at the same time the piece seems essentially unfair. If there are Catholic-Israeli differences, it is surely better that they be discussed. And if they are discussed, should the discussion, with an American Catholic Cardinal, be linked in print with an account of anti-Semitism in Russia forty or fifty years ago, no matter how painful the author's memories? Is Cardinal Spellman, in this case, or any other member of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States, to be held responsible for the cruelties and injustices of historic anti-Semitism, for the actions of an Orthodox Russian Bishop many years ago, or for the fact that to the author the principal of his local school looked "like a Jesuit priest"? To our mind, these questions can only be answered in the negative.

When such matters are discussed, it seems to us that Christians must say that there are many pages in history that none of us would want to see repeated. If the Protestant and the Catholic alike have historic resentments in this national circumstance or that, the Jew without question has been the classic victim of history. On this score the Christian must approach the past with the deepest humility, not just for the obvious crimes of men like Hitler but for the place in history allotted to the Jew over the centuries.

This truth, we are convinced, cannot be emphasized too much. And yet, at some time we in America have to break the chains that bind us to the worst in history. At some point the Protestant must be able to stop looking at Pope John XXIII as if he were Alexander VI; at some point the Catholic must be able to stop looking at the local Protestant pastor as if he were a rebellious monk; at some point the Jew must be able to look at an American Cardinal without seeing an Orthodox Bishop from Czarist Russia. To know that history has left us all with scars and that these scars are often sensitive is one thing; to open up old wounds needlessly is something else again.

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The Confessional Hero

There is every reason for the confessee to be one of the few acceptable heroes in the modern world

by JOHN P. SISK

LONG before Charles Van Doren admitted his part in the T.V. quiz show fraud it had been apparent that we were living in an unusually confessional period. I am thinking not only of the familiar "true confession" magazines and the frequency with which the confession pattern has been utilized in literature ranging from detective stories to serious fiction, but to the number of prominent people who in recent years have made public admission in one form or another of their indiscretions, follies or sins. One thinks immediately of such people as Diana Barrymore, Sheilah Graham, Lillian Roth, Errol Flynn, Mary Astor, Colonel Gregory "Pappy" Boyington and the many others who have recently "told all" in print.

Any autobiography will have, of course, an element of the confession in it. But there is a kind of autobiography, such as the above named people have written, in which the confessional element is very pronounced. Such literature often involves for the reading public a rather startling revision of people and events, and there is a tendency to classify it as exposé literature.

It is true that the confession and the exposé have in common the revelation, generally sensational, of the corrupt, shoddy, seamy or selfish underside of life, but there is an important difference between the confession and the exposé. While the exposé may be a necessary preliminary to correction, its immediate effect is likely to be unsettling or frightening, even for those readers who derive a sensational or perverse enjoyment from it. The immediate effect of the true confession, however, is clarity, order and hope. This is because its general laws are close to those which Maxwell Anderson, in *Off Broadway,* claims to have discovered for dramatic structure. The protagonist of the true confession, that is, makes an emotional discovery that practically dictates the end of his story: he learns through suffering and he experiences a spiritual regeneration.

There are confessions that, like *The Memoirs of Casanova,* simply recount sensational experience; nevertheless, the characteristic appeal of the confession lies in its conformity to Anderson's laws. Thus a true confession magazine in a recent announcement of a short story contest stresses the desirability of stories "true to life and full of feeling," but only after emphasizing that it wants stories in which one's "entire destiny" has been changed as a result of "new wisdom" so that he becomes "another person."

The typical true confession is a story with a happy ending, an arduous journey into light in circumstances in which the all too likely thing is to be lost in the dark. This is the common appeal of such different works as St. Augustine's *Confessions,* Lillian Roth's *I'll Cry Tomorrow* or a "prize-winning" story in a current confession magazine. It is the discovery of truth by proving it upon one's pulse, in its dramatic and defining contest with error.

IT IS not possible to list all the reasons for the popularity of confessional literature, but I think that certain factors stand out clearly enough. There is of course the crucial Christian concept of man as a creature of grace and free will, capable at his lowest moments of a turn for the better, not doomed till he is dead. There is romanticism with its emphasis on the passional, experiencing individual, on the agony-insight syndrome and on spiritual rebirth. There is the evangelistic tradition with its expectation of the sudden, dramatic conversion followed by public confession of a sinful life. There is psychiatry with its own promise of a new life following upon true confession. And there is that older and more generalized dream of the sudden, marvelous change: we will wake some morning charged with indomitable courage, or imbued with the love of our fellow men, or on fire with Christian zeal, or in-

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tensely alive to the beauty of the universe—or simply free at last of the cigarette habit.

There is, in fact, every reason for the confessee to be, as he is, one of the few acceptable heroes in the modern world. We are too aware of how little control we have over ourselves to accept the old style hero except in such special fantasy contexts as those of the western and detective story or of the historical romance. But the confessional hero is our Everyman: almost but not quite confounded by his sin or folly.

It is important that the confessional hero is modest, even to the point of underlining his modesty with cynicism. For a long time now convention has demanded that the successful man attribute his success to luck. He simply got the breaks. This philosophy of success-as-lottery (an understandable over-reaction from an older and more naive attitude) is involved with a good deal of self-deception and hypocritical catering to those who have not succeeded because, they like to think, they have not gotten the breaks. But the confessional hero is much more authentically modest than the successful man, for he has had to face up to an unflattering version of himself and to confront his insignificance in the total scheme of things.

It is important too that the confessional hero tends to be so passive. At times he is even a kind of quietist, not so much a meriter of grace as, like DeFoe's Moll Flanders, one upon whom it is mysteriously visited. The grand type here is Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, who, as is so often the case with confessional heroes, is saved by love, but by a love he does nothing to earn and of which he seems to be no more deserving than his dead shipmates. The appeal of this kind of hero in a world where it is hard to base one's hopes on earned grace or on a planned and rational course of action is obvious enough. Foolish, dissipated or corrupted as he may be, he has the great virtue of durability, which means that his chances for some kind of salvage or salvation are better. He suggests Alcoholics Anonymous, with its emphasis on day-to-day endurance rather than on the old style heroism of long-term objectives.

The confessional hero is, in fact, a kind of saint. The saint is a hero in that he dramatizes human possibility. But the drama of many saints, like that of many secular heroes, now seems relevant only to a make-believe world. We prefer saints like Mary Magdalen whose lives are variations on the *felix culpa* theme, or who, like St. Paul, are struck blindingly from the saddle while riding high in their sins. There is hope for us here. The confessional hero acts out such a saint-like message of hope and—especially in the true confession magazines—acts it out with a wealth of humble and edifying references to the Deity. I suspect that for millions of readers true confessions are the only religious reading they know.

FOR THE individual confessee, of course, the release from guilt may be the prime consideration. But he is also motivated, as is the judge-penitent of Camus' *The Fall,* by a desire to return to community—the abasement of public confession being offered in exchange for sympathetic acceptance. Considered sheerly as a matter of policy, then, public confession is hard to beat, for the confessee offers himself as a scapegoat to his fellow men, who can no more reject him than they can reject themselves. Thus Charles Van Doren's confession won him the predictable expressions of sympathy and offers of jobs, despite the fact that the public had good reason to doubt its authenticity as confession.

For the confessee the confession also has the value of perspective and control. As members of Alcoholics Anonymous know, one has not begun to master himself till he can stand apart from himself and state what manner of man he was. The act of confessing is the proof to oneself that he is now in command of what before compelled him. One can sense in the most exhibitionist popular confessions this need of the confessee's to prove to himself that he is at last master. The same need is there when one's confession is only to a diary. To a man like Pepys this experience of control is probably more important than the remote if egotistically exciting prospect of eventual publication to the world.

It is here that the true confession verges, dangerously, on the work of art. True confession magazines, in fact, like to label their experiences "stories" and "novelettes." In any event, the confessee, whether his confession is oral or written, always faces the temptation to give an aesthetically satisfying form to his confession, for to make of one's confession a work of art, as Fitzgerald did in his "Crack-Up" essays or Henry Miller did in his "Tropic" books, is to assert a supreme degree of control over a former version of oneself. But the danger lies in the possibility of ceasing to be an honest confessee and becoming instead the artist whose experiences are valued as grist for the mill. Obviously the confessee trying to be artist risks distortion and self-deception, so that in the end the unconfessed truth of the matter is that the confession is an attempt to hide the truth from oneself.

Written confessions are easily corrupted by the impulse to artistic form because of the ministrations, whether acknowledged or not, of a literary midwife. Ideally, a collaborator helps the confessee to discover and express the true pattern and meaning of events; but in actual fact he more often imposes upon events a merely approximate but salable pattern. This sense of the pattern-applying ghost at work is especially strong in the confession magazines. But even if such confessions were largely the fictions of professional hacks (as I assume many of them are) they would still be excel-

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lent examples of the corruptions of life and truth by art—a very shoddy art, of course.

IT IS easy enough to see why true confessions should aspire to be art. "Since the days of Jean-Jacques and Chateaubriand," says Mauriac apropos of the Claudel-Gide correspondence, "it is no longer the work that matters but rather the drama of the author, which it comments on and enhances by its imagery." The statement is extreme but the emphasis is right; one who wishes to see it documented need only read Professor M. H. Abrams' brilliant study of romantic theory, *The Mirror and the Lamp,* especially its chapter on "Literature as a Revelation of Personality." With the advent of romanticism, Abrams tells us, "the audience gradually receded into the background, giving place to the poet himself, and his own mental powers and emotional needs, as the predominant cause and even the end and test of art."

A further refinement of the relationship between art and true confession is the use of the confession as an ironic device in the hands of the novelist. Examples are Mann's *The Confessions of Felix Krull,* Camus' *The Stranger* and *The Fall,* Braine's *Room at the Top,* Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* and Nabokov's *Lolita.* In fact, modern first-person treatments of the journey-towards-the-light theme are likely to sound like true confession literature, and often suffer at the hands of literary critics because of the vulgar connotations of the genre.

In fiction that self-consciously uses the confession as a device, art tends not to corrupt truth, as in popular true confession, but to discover it. Nevertheless, such books are often a scandal to those who find the corruptions of popular true confession uplifting. This is because they are not accustomed to questioning the confessee's interpretation of events. Thus Nabokov's Humbert Humbert ends up in jail and Mann's Felix Krull has been in jail but their attitudes towards this experience are unacceptable, and for most of the true confession public this means that Nabokov and Mann too have unacceptable attitudes. Rather understandably, it prefers a penitent Moll Flanders growing piously old in wealth and honor.

Of more immediate concern to the average reader, however, is the fact that confessional literature, whether artistic or "true," is part of the literature of violent realism. Often, in fact, the narrator is less a confessee than a first-person reporter of sensational events. The predominant underlying assumption of such literature is that reality, in Lionel Trilling's words, "is always material reality, hard, resistant, unformed, impenetrable and unpleasant." To face reality is to face the unmitigated mess of the human lot. Thus confessional literature, in which the discovery of moral reality tends to be limited to the sensational encounter with evil, the disturbing implication, often, is that maturity or self-discovery or spiritual rebirth is the exclusive property of those who have been selected by mysterious and sinister forces for the refining ordeal—as if adultery or alcoholism, for instance, were sure ways to insight and God.

This is not to deny that one can learn through suffering, that good can come out of evil, or that God's grace moves in mysterious ways. What bothers one, however, is the moral fatalism of so many confessional heroes. One even senses in the confessional hero a mystique of suffering and evil: the season in hell (à la Melville and Rimbaud) as the only true way to wisdom and grace. It is the way of an elite, but an elite that is known not so much for its deeds as the fact of its mysterious selection. And the elite are the ones who are most fully alive, for to be alive is to experience violently even if painfully. When a reviewer of *My Wicked, Wicked Ways* said of Errol Flynn that "he had one of the fullest, most active lives of his period" he was only expressing a commonplace conviction that the full life will probably be lived picaresquely outside the law, whether of moderation, society, morality or religion. This conviction helps to explain the secret admiration and envy that the law-abiding citizen so often feels for the criminal.

THE POPULARITY of the confessional hero, then, as befits a modern hero, tends to begin in despair: despair of any rational, willed effort in the direction of maturity or salvation; despair of finding any moral meaning in the normal round of life; despair of finding any meaning whatever short of a life *in extremis.* But particularly he begins in and appeals to a despair of innocence. The confessional hero is not characteristically the downright, old-fashioned sinner. He is more the naive, wide-eyed child taken in by the deceptive appearances of life, doomed to suffer because of his sensitivity and responsiveness to life.

It was this image that Charles Van Doren evoked in the best tradition of the true confession: he had discovered, he said, that things are not always what they seem—thereby appealing to our common, even tragic, awareness of the deceptiveness of life's utopian promise, the irresistibility of its lures. To the innocent who has lost his optimism the great and shocking truth about life is his discovery of the lie of it, and the heroic achievement is to come back from the experience a scarred but wiser and stronger man. For the likely thing, as we see in Dreiser's Clyde Griffith or Fitzgerald's Jay Gatsby, is not to come back at all.

The true confession and the exposé, then, can finally be seen as the positive and negative aspects of the American innocence—as attempts to cope with the tensions, perplexities and frustrations of men thrown into situations far too tantalizing and maliciously com-

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plex for human virtue and ingenuity to cope with. Thus the true companion piece to Diana Barrymore's *Too Much, Too Soon* is Gustavus Myers' *History of the Great American Fortunes.*

So the fall of Charles Van Doren was a great shock, but it was after all the most comprehensible of falls, the fall of the innocent (a fact that was obscured for those who in their glee or consternation saw it as the fall of the intellectual). But Americans adjust quickly to this shock, having developed a certain protective tolerance to revelations of this kind (if we had not we would have been overwhelmed by our innocence long ago). After all, what else could be expected in the circumstances? Who would not have done the same thing? The same tolerance tempers our indignation with the great scalawags in our history, whose insatiable lust for place, power or money gave them a kind of heroic stature. Perhaps what we recognize instinctively is the quality of innocence in American wickedness: that naive reach for the ultimate which, with Jay Gatsby as with Jay Gould, derives much of its strength from its ability to see its objectives only in the limited contexts of the adolescent.

Still the fall of innocence is a disturbing thing, for neither tolerance nor cynicism is an adequate protection against despair. Hence the popularity and importance of the true confession. The true confession fan may, like the wrestling fan, be willing to connive at his own deception in the interest of a thrill, but more than he knows he wants also to be relieved of his own burden of guilt, and he wants to be saved from his own crippling innocence. Perhaps the confessional hero is, among other things, a mythical creation of the painful process of learning that our trouble lies not so much with evil, deceptive reality as with something in ourselves that has made such a picture of reality inevitable.

CURIOUS TRIUMPH OF HETERODOXY

Sholokov's Survival

by BRUCE A. COOK

QUIETLY, almost surreptitiously, Knopf recently reissued Mikhail Sholokov's well-known *The Silent Don* as well as *Seeds of Tomorrow,* the first volume of his unfinished trilogy, *The Virgin Soil Upturned.* In a special issue *Atlantic Monthly* carried a Sholokov short story as its lead piece. At about the same time Signet Books sent paperback copies of the first of the Don books, *And Quiet Flows the Don,* into thousands of drugstores and newsstands all over the country. All this publishing activity in the period of a few months seems to indicate that a Sholokov revival of sorts is under way. Like most such literary revivals, this too is "long overdue."

The reasons for the rise of his stock on the literary market are plain enough. His American publishers, moved by The Spirit of Camp David, must have felt it a propitious time to reissue the work of the man whom the Russians consider their greatest living novelist. And the frequent appearance of Sholokov's name in Western newspapers and magazines in recent months must have made his name familiar even to those who have read not a page of his work.

For Sholokov has been engaged in the Pasternak affair, alternately defending Boris Pasternak's right to publish *Doctor Zhivago* in the Soviet Union, and condemning the book itself. A statement he made to reporters in Paris was quoted in both *L'Express* and *Les Lettres Françaises:* "It was a mistake to forbid the publication of *Doctor Zhivago.* The managers of the Union of Soviet Writers lost their nerve. It should have been left to the readers to fight the battle against Pasternak. The novel isn't worth much. It's an amorphous mass which should have been seriously revised and reconsidered before it ever saw the light of day. . . ." Later in London, and again with Khrushchev's official party in the United States, Sholokov refused to stand by what he had said in Paris about *Zhivago,* and rapped Pasternak severely for his unwillingness to take "comradely criticism" of his controversial work.

An additional reason for the renewed attention to Sholokov is that a second volume of the trilogy, *Virgin Soil Upturned,* is at last ready to be published. Although the first volume, which appeared in the Soviet Union in 1932, has since become required reading for Russian schoolchildren, Sholokov originally had considerable difficulty getting it published. *Seeds of Tomorrow* was withheld for months by the State Publishing House until pressure from some of his friends in high places (Sholokov himself has served as a deputy

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to the Supreme Soviet) brought about its publication—after suggested revisions had been made.

Eight chapters of the second volume of the trilogy appeared in a Russian magazine in 1955. And late last year Sholokov announced the work's completion, saying that it will be published "soon." He is also said to have recently finished his long-awaited war novel, *They Fought for their Country*. Begun in 1942, fragments of it were published in *Pravda* during the war. Sholokov was promised that this book, too, will be published in the indefinite future.

Except for the usual number of articles, sketches, and stories, all that we know of Sholokov's work is the uncompleted trilogy, the fragments of the war novel, and of course, *The Silent Don*. His position as a novelist is not likely to be much changed by the completed *Virgin Soil Upturned* or *They Fought for Their Country*. Sholokov is one writer whose worth will, and probably should be judged on the basis of a single work. His reputation was built on *The Silent Don*, and on that massive, 1,300-odd-page foundation it firmly rests. Yet the work itself is not what one would expect as that of Russia's acclaimed and approved novelist.

MIKHAIL Sholokov came to Moscow in 1923 as an eighteen-year-old veteran of the civil war. There he published his first sketches and stories of his native Don region in Communist youth journals. When a collection of them was issued in 1925, he returned to his home district, married, and settled down to work on a long novel about his Cossack people in the civil war.

Two years later, the editors of the Moscow magazine *Oktiabr* received a huge hodge-podge of a manuscript full of notes, pencilings, and corrections. Almost in desperation, they dropped it in the lap of A. S. Serafimovich, a respected *ancien régime* writer and critic. He plowed through the manuscript and convinced the editors that it was a masterpiece—a work of "absolute genius." Thus the first volume of Mikhail Sholokov's *The Silent Don* was published in 1928. The second and third volumes followed promptly in 1929 and 1932.

Many years passed between the appearance of the third and fourth volumes of the novel, and these were important years in the Soviet Union. The First Five Year Plan and the collectivization of Russian agriculture were brutally implemented by Stalin; the Ukrainian famine was followed by the purge trials. It must have seemed to Sholokov an impolitic time to resume his work, for he did not return to the book until political pressures inside Russia had lessened. He submitted half of the concluding volume for publication in 1938, and the remainder in 1940.

When publication of the last part of the book was announced, many of Sholokov's readers stood overnight at bookstalls just to be among the first to learn the fate of the Cossack, Gregor. When the completed work was published in its four volume edition, over eight million copies were sold. With such wide appeal, Sholokov has achieved an apparently unassailable position as Russia's most popular novelist.

The American reader is likely to find *The Silent Don* a much different book from what he expects. Presumably it can be considered an (officially) acceptable example of socialist realism, since over half of it was published in the Soviet Union after that famous doctrine was made dogma by Andrei Zhdanov in 1932. We might expect it to be a "positive" work (in the Marxist sense) written to the greater glory of Communism. It is not.

THE NOVEL covers a period of about ten years—from 1912 to 1922. Although the action of the book shifts back and forth across southern Russia to Moscow, and even into Rumania, the Don-side village of Tatarsk provides the dominant setting and most of the characters. It was probably Sholokov's original intention to make *The Silent Don* a balanced chronicle of the Melekhov family and their village neighbors during the years of the First World War, the Revolution, and the civil war that followed. At least there are strong indications of this in the first two books of the novel (published here as *And Quiet Flows the Don).*

In them, Sholokov uses the now-familiar shifting point of view—which has come to be closely identified with socialist realist fiction—moving from character to character in the Cossack village, introducing us to reckless, independent people quite unlike any we may have met in the more refined literatures of the West. He takes us from the Melekhovs to the kulak Korshunovs, into the merchant Mokhov's mill, and out to the estate of the aristocratic Listnitskys', up and down the rigid Cossack social scale, through huts and manors. It seems that Sholokov wants to tell us everything about everyone in Tatarsk. Then, as we leave the village and ride off to war with its soldiers, he compulsively calls forth a vast regiment of minor characters—officers and men, soldiers and civilians—whose separate threads of life he winds through war, revolution, and civil war, then drops to pick up again, somehow keeping the threads untangled.

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We look longest and deepest into the lives of the Melekhovs. Taking us back into the nineteenth century, Sholokov traces the family's alien, Turkish strain as a symbol of all that is rebellious and ungovernable in the Cossack people. To heighten this, he underlines a strong dramatic contrast between Gregor Melekhov, "the Turk," and his "Russian" brother Piotra.

> Piotra, his elder, married son, took after his mother: stocky and snub-nosed, a luxuriant shock of corn-colored hair, hazel eyes. But the younger, Gregor, was like his father: half a head taller than Piotra, some six years younger, the same hanging hook nose as his father's, bluish almonds of burning irises in slightly oblique slits, brown, ruddy skin drawn over rectangular cheekbones. Gregor stooped slightly, just like his father: even in their smile there was a common rather savage quality.

If not always attractive, this "rather savage quality" is at once the key to Gregor Melekhov's dark, animal nature, and at least officially, his tragic flaw. For as the novel moves into its third and fourth volumes *(The Don Flows Home to the Sea* in the American edition), Sholokov drops his Russian-Turk dichotomy and gradually restricts his shifts of scene and character, playing his camera long and close on Gregor as he leads his division of insurgent Cossacks into battle after battle against the Red Army. *The Silent Don* becomes essentially a tragedy of political circumstance played around a single character of heroic proportions. It is Gregor Melekhov we watch as he steps upstage; it is to him we listen as he broods on the moral and political consequences of the civil war.

ALTHOUGH through a good three-fourths of the book Gregor is an active enemy of the Soviet government, Sholokov makes it abundantly clear that his heart is in the right place: Gregor is a "natural" Socialist liberal. And he is converted to Marxism by a fellow patient in a World War I military hospital.

> Within a month of the Ukrainian's arrival all the system on which Gregor's life had been built was a smoking ruin. It had already been rotten, eaten up with a canker of the monstrous iniquity of the war, and it needed only a jolt. The jolt was given, and Gregor's mind awoke. He tossed about, seeking a way out, a solution to his predicament, and gladly found it in Garanzha's answers.

With the eruption of the October Revolution, Gregor joins the Reds in their campaign against Kornilov's counter-revolutionary forces, only to leave them in revulsion at atrocities against prisoners committed by the Red commander, Podtielkov. He rides home to Tatarsk, and when the Cossack people proclaim their republic, and rise up to defend it, Gregor's family ties and loyalty to his people draw him into the long struggle against the Red Army. Although he becomes a division commander of the Cossack forces, his distrust of their White allies and his Marxist inclinations make Gregor himself an object of distrust among his own Cossacks. Not even the men who ride with him know quite how to take him. Gregor's chief of staff tells him, "Why, I don't understand your position in this business. On the one hand you're fighting for the old regime, but on the other hand you're something—excuse me if I put it bluntly—something rather on the lines of a Bolshevik yourself."

Torn between his loyalty to the Cossacks and his sympathy with Marxism, disgusted with the butchery practiced by both the Reds and the Whites, Gregor Melekhov becomes a sort of political Hamlet who continually wavers in his opposition to the Bolsheviks, without ever being able to break with their enemies. Throughout the book, Sholokov seems to be preparing him for a spectacular Marxist conversion—a conversion which simply never comes. No, Gregor Melekhov remains—at least in the eyes of the State—an enemy of the Revolution and a "worthless man" to the very end. And although Sholokov allows us little optimism as to his hero's inevitable fate, he does demand indignation from us at its injustice.

Last year, a young Soviet author, writing anonymously in the French magazine, *Esprit,* made rather heretical comments on the "worthless man" and his place in Soviet literature. Taken out of context, the strong irony of this bitter essay on socialist realism may not at first be apparent in what I quote:

> The reconsideration given to the worthless man and his rapid transformation into a negative individual was in full swing in the twenties, at the time when the positive hero took shape. When they were put side by side, everyone saw clearly that heroes without aim did not exist, but that there were only people who were for or against and that the worthless man was absolutely nothing but an enemy in disguise, a wretched traitor to unmask and punish without delay. . . . The sole dissonance would be *The Silent Don* where Sholokov reveals the tragic fate of a worthless man, Gregor Melekhov, and bids him a farewell full of sympathy. As Melekhov belonged to simple folk and not to the intelligentsia, we closed our eyes. Now this novel is considered to be a model of socialist realism, a model which, of course, has no imitators.

That this "model of socialist realism" has no imitators should hardly come as a surprise to us; what is *astonishing,* though, is that this book should have been written and published during the severest period of Stalinist oppression. It is Soviet literature's prime paradox that its most esteemed work—and its most popular—argues for Man against the State. The tragedy implicit in this lost argument reflects the fate of millions of people in the Soviet Union—and elsewhere.

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Edmund Wilson has been called 'the dean of American critics'

America's Sainte-Beuve

by EDWARD P. J. CORBETT

THE RECENT appearance of Edmund Wilson's series of articles on the six-nation Iroquois Indians in the *New Yorker* and now in book form (*Apologies to the Iroquois,* Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, $4.95.) came as no surprise to devotees of this renowned literary critic. It wasn't many years ago that Wilson did a similar study of the Indians of the Southwest. But almost from the beginning of his journalistic career in the twenties, Wilson's range of interest and competency has been so extensive and so unpredictable that he seems a twentieth-century revival of the Renaissance polymath.

That Edmund Wilson is associated in many people's minds chiefly with literary criticism is a tribute to the liveliness and brilliance of the critical work that appeared in such books as *Axel's Castle* (1931), *The Triple Thinkers* (1938), *The Wound and the Bow* (1941), and in the series of articles, mainly from the *New Republic* and the *New Yorker,* that were later collected in *The Shores of Light* and *Classics and Commercials.* But over the years Mr. Wilson has also produced more than a dozen of non-critical works—novels, plays, poetry, social reporting, history-biography. To find a prototype of this amazing versatility, one must go back as far as the eighteenth century, to men like Dr. Johnson or Oliver Goldsmith.

Perhaps the most polyglot of American critics, Wilson has qualified himself for his far-ranging travels in the realms of gold by acquiring a reading-knowledge of Latin, Greek, French, German, Russian, and Hebrew. When he wants to score a point against the Humanists, Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, he can quote and comment knowingly on the Greek text of *Antigone;* when he reads Genesis for the first time, in his grandfather's Hebrew Bible that he discovered in the attic of his mother's home, he can gain valuable insights into Judaic culture and mentality by his knowledge of Hebrew diction and syntax; when he reviews Pasternak's *Dr. Zhivago,* he can spend the first third of his review evaluating the quality of the English translation. And all this done without any air of pedantry.

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That his tastes are as estimable as his talents is evidenced by the number of writers whom he "discovered" and brought to the attention of the American reading public. In 1916, while he was a fifteen-dollar-a-week reporter for the New York *Evening Sun,* he wrote a review of two of Edna St. Vincent Millay's poems, which he first saw when he visited his cousin at Vassar, where Miss Millay was still an undergraduate. His review of *In Our Time* in the *Dial* for October, 1924, was the first criticism of Hemingway to appear in print in America, and with the exception of a review that appeared in the April issue of *the transatlantic review* in Paris, the first review of Hemingway to appear anywhere in the world. Wilson prides himself on being one of the earliest promoters in America of Henry Miller and André Malraux. F. Scott Fitzgerald, who was a year behind him at Princeton, felt that it was Wilson who was chiefly responsible for his literary career.

HOW DID Edmund Wilson come by his extraordinary learning and proficiency? Before anyone can do on Wilson the kind of Sainte-Beuvian study that Wilson has done so well on other writers, he will need a fuller biographical or autobiographical work than is now available. Until such a work is available, he will have to be content with shorter autobiographical pieces, like "Thoughts on Being Bibliographed" and "The Author at Sixty." There are some interesting relevations about Wilson's background in the memoir he wrote about his Princeton teacher Christian Gauss. According to Wilson, this memoir "indicates to some extent the point of view from which I started off in my criticism of the twenties." Wilson admired the unusual fluidity of Gauss's mind, his extreme flexibility and enormous range, his highly developed sense of history, his social consciousness, his devotion to liberty, his interest in the "discipline of aesthetic form" and, finally, his concern with the traits of literary personality.

These are some of the same characteristics we have come to note in Wilson. Before Gauss became a college professor, he had been, as Wilson was soon to become, a newspaper correspondent and a reviewer

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for the literary journals. Wilson remarked that Gauss's ideas on any subject were always taking new turns. "He gave the impression," Wilson says, "of keeping in touch, without the slightest effort—he must have examined all the printed matter that came into the university library—with everything that was going on everywhere, as well as everything that had ever gone on." Something of Wilson's own catholicity of interest is certainly owing to the example of this provocative teacher.

There were other influences, of course, some of which Wilson acknowledges, others of which we can infer from the various tacks that his work took. Something of his interest in journalistic writings was owing to his early literary heroes, DeQuincey, Poe, and Shaw. His admiration for Mencken and James Huneker disposed him for elucidating and promoting important new writers. His weariness with the nit-picking explicators of texts and his fondness for such "enjoyers" of literature as Lamb, Pater, and Saintsbury determined him to sound the note, in his own reviewing, of the pleasures of literature.

Profounder influences account for the historical turn that his studies took. Wilson sees historical criticism as having its roots ultimately in Vico's *La Scienza Nuova* (1725)—"the first social interpretation," Wilson says, "of a work of literature." Vico's notion of interpreting literature in terms of its historical origins, with complementary ideas from Herder and Hegel, was picked up, developed, and put into practice by such French critics as Michelet, Renan, Sainte-Beuve, and Taine. To Taine's germinal thesis about *race, moment,* and *milieu* was added a new element—Marx and Engel's *economic* base. The historical approach to literature was finally rounded out with the psychoanalysis of Freud—the interpretation of literature in the light of the personalities behind it.

All of these influences are evident in the literary, social, political, and historical writings that have flowed from Wilson's pen since the thirties. To absorb these influences, Wilson had to range far and wide, even among some of the by-paths of literature. As a result, his work has a marked cosmopolitan quality about it, and with its twin emphasis on "art" and "ideas," it seems to be perpetuating Matthew Arnold's notion of criticism as "a disinterested endeavor to get to know the best that is known or thought in the world" and Arnold's notion of literature as being "a criticism of life." "In my view," Wilson says, " all our intellectual activity, in whatever field it takes place, is an attempt to give a meaning to our experience—that is, to make life more practicable; for by understanding things we make it easier to survive and get around among them."

With this notion of the didactic function of literature, Wilson has come a long way since *Axel's Castle,* in which he was exploring and interpreting the private worlds and the esoteric symbols of writers like Eliot, Yeats, Proust, and Joyce. As early as 1937, in the *South Atlantic Quarterly,* Charles Glicksberg noted this shift in Wilson's loyalties and enthusiasms: "The student of Symbolism has begun to grow conscious of his duties to society; he now proclaims that literature and life must be wedded, that the new writers cannot possibly escape from the concrete world of striving and suffering."

SO IT was no surprise to Wilson fans that with the onset of the Depression his writings, both literary and social, took a Marxist turn. Even a superficial investigation of Wilson's "Marxist phase," however, reveals that the circling moth never did move close enough to the flame to get burned. Unlike some of the liberals of that period, Wilson kept his commitment to Marxism intellectual and tentative, never allowing it to become emotional and final. In fact, it has been characteristic of Wilson throughout his literary career that his Yankee independence of mind, his rationalism and his skepticism have kept him from ever committing himself irrevocably to any creed or doctrine —a characteristic that accounts for some of his strengths and some of his weaknesses as a critic.

Wilson's disaffection with our commercial, capitalistic society went back at least as far as his college days at Princeton, when he was at odds with his staunchly Republican father and when he regarded Woodrow Wilson as the best hope for the reform of the worst abuses in our bourgeois society. His firsthand observation of industrial conditions in America, which he published in *The American Jitters* at the height of the Depression, deeply disturbed him, and he turned a hopeful eye to the Soviet Union. Evidence of his incipient disillusionment with Soviet Communism and the restoration of some of his faith in the values of American democracy is recorded in *Travels in Two Democracies* (1936). Wilson's complete disillusionment with Communism came as a result of the seven-year study he made of Communism in preparation for his great book *To the Finland Station.* His disenchantment was due in large measure to his having detected the absolutism in the social, economic, and political views of the Soviet Communists. But, significantly enough, another part of that disenchantment resulted from his horrified realization of the Soviet attitude toward literature. What he had come to admire in men like Marx and Engels, Trotsky and Lenin, was that being men sensitive to the aesthetic values of literature, they discouraged attempts to judge literature in terms of its purely political tendencies. But the crass, unlettered Stalin looked upon literature solely as a means of manipulating people.

And so in the forties Wilson returned to the literary

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concerns that had occupied him in the twenties, but without entirely abandoning his interests in extra-literary matters, as witness the post-war publication of such books as *Red, Black, Blond, and Olive, Europe without Baedeker,* and *The Scrolls from the Dead Sea.* What one misses in the latter-day Wilson is a discussion of the young writers—the sort of thing that made Wilson's reviews of the twenties and thirties so exciting. How we miss his perceptive causeries on such writers as J.D. Salinger and Saul Bellow. But Wilson seems to have said goodbye to all that. In "The Author at Sixty," Wilson announces, "I make no attempt to keep up with the younger American writers; and I only hope to have time to get through some of the classics I have never read." Wilson himself may profit by that decision; the readers of contemporary fiction can only lose by it.

What will be posterity's estimate of Edmund Wilson? Already an impressive number of noted literateurs, especially among the English, regard him as "the dean of American critics." Whatever the final estimate may be, his shortcomings will have to be assayed along with such virtues as his catholicity, erudition, perspicacity and elegance. The most devastating judgments to date on Wilson appeared in the lead-off chapter of the 1948 edition of Stanley Edgar Hyman's *The Armed Vision.* Some of Hyman's charges—Wilson's ineptitude in dealing with poetry, his borrowing of ideas and insights without acknowledgment, his tendency to view matter and form as a dichotomy, his humorlessness, his snobbishness—are tenable; at least, such charges will have to be seriously weighed in any assessment of Wilson's stature. Others of Hyman's charges are simply manifestations of the nastiest kind of muckraking—e.g., the insinuation that many of the details in "The Princess with the Golden Hair," the most controversial story in *The Memoirs of Hecate County,* were autobiographical. (It is interesting that Hyman withdrew this chapter on Wilson from the 1955 Vintage paperback edition of *The Armed Vision.)*

ONE of Wilson's disabling flaws is his antipathy for religion. Now, a man's rejection of religion does not necessarily disqualify him as a critic, but in Wilson's case his unmitigated rationalism has prevented him from making a "real estimate" of certain religious works. His renunciation of Evelyn Waugh is a case in point. Certain of Wilson's strictures on *Brideshead Revisited* were valid, and, be it noted, Waugh has been going steadily downhill since the publication of that novel. But Wilson's lack of sympathy with Waugh's religious preoccupations and Waugh's theme of "the tug of grace" distorted Wilson's judgment of the work as a whole.

The same Wilson who once gave us such a sensitive reading of the earlier Eliot was reproached by R. P. Blackmur for criticizing Eliot's *Ash Wednesday* in total ignorance of its Christian elements and for thereby misreading the entire poem. Nor did Wilson succeed any better when he tried to point out the import, for our times, of the Dead Sea Scrolls. In his eagerness to see the Dead Sea Scrolls as a discovery which would eventually subvert the divinity of the Christian church, he conveniently closed his eyes to those interpretations of the Scrolls that more thorough scholars have made. Nothing points out so well the irony of this weakness in Wilson as Mr. Hyman's observation that Wilson is "skeptically minded and dogmatically mannered."

Edmund Wilson, taken with all his wounds and his powerful bows, has some salutary lessons for professors of literature and academic critics. For one thing, he can teach them the folly of cultivating a narrow garden. Too many of the inhabitants of the Groves of Academe are becoming hidebound specialists, instead of the wide-ranging connoisseurs of several cultures. As a result, young Ph.D.'s in English are forced to market themselves as "eighteenth-century men" or "Victorian men." What English Departments should be seeking is masters of English and American literature—nay, students of world literature. Wilson can serve as a shining example in our time of the broadly educated man.

The manner of Wilson's literary studies constitutes another lesson for the professors of literature. It is something of a commonplace now that much of the writing in the scholarly journals is simply unreadable. Wilson's reverence for the great trinity of Lucidity, Force, and Ease has made him, to use the label that W. H. Auden recently applied to him, "one of the most elegant prose writers alive." But it is not only Wilson's respect for some of the basic rhetorical principles which has made him such a readable critic. A great deal of his attractiveness comes from the tone of his essays.

What has contributed more than anything else to the deadliness of academic prose is the prescription—laid down by God knows what pedant—that scholarly writing must assume the impersonality of science. Wilson cut his teeth on such essayists as Shaw, Chesterton, Belloc, Beerbohm, and Mencken. "All these writers," he has said, "were everlastingly saying, 'I': the exploitation of personality had become an integral part of criticism. Now the habit has gone out of fashion." Without any sacrifice of such scholarly virtues as curiosity, accuracy, disinterestedness, the "I" must creep back into academic writing. If it doesn't, the academic critics may soon find that they are talking into a void. Edmund Wilson, in the meantime, will still be talking to an enchanted audience—an audience that he will send away fired up with an urge to read the works that he has been discussing.

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Leslie Fiedler re-reads
the classic American novels

Extra-Literary Criticism

by THOMAS F. CURLEY

THE CRITICISM I enjoy most is usually about books I haven't read. Most critics would feel silly if they admitted to being confused or uncertain about what they criticized, so they work up a theory or two, buttressed by learned and brilliant comparisons, and give the eager reader his money's worth.

The criticism I've just read, however, is nothing like that. First of all it's about the American novel and everyone has read some few American novels. Secondly it's opinionative and, to use the author's own word, insolent. At least that word characterizes Leslie Fiedler's ambition in this, his most recent act of "total moral engagement" *(Love and Death In The American Novel.* Criterion. $8.50). "Nothing," he writes, ". . . will drive some readers back from the certainties of textbook explanations to the difficulties of the work of art itself; but others, less resolutely insensitive, will, I hope, be troubled enough by suggestions of new possibilities in old works, so that . . . they will never again be able to half-read *Huckleberry Finn* or *The Last of the Mohicans* in the state of torpor they have taken for cultural security."

At the very center of Mr. Fiedler's concern is sex or, as he puts it, "the failure of the American fictionist to deal with adult heterosexual love and his consequent obsession with death, incest and innocent homosexuality. . . ." It is Fiedler's contention, amply documented and forcefully argued, that such a "failure" is not one of mere historical interest; an awareness of this failure is as pertinent to an understanding of Faulkner and R. P. Warren as to an understanding of Charles Brockden Brown and Mark Twain. I use the word awareness because Fiedler himself does not pretend to understand this failure completely, remarking at one point that it is hard to say "whether the fear of sex, a strange blindness to the daily manifestations of sex, or the attenuation of sexuality itself drove the American novel back over the lintel of puberty in the declining years of the nineteenth century."

The writers of the early and middle nineteenth century did not do much better for, if they wrote of adults, they avoided what Fiedler considers the main theme of the novel, seduction and marriage. In an attempt to clear up this difference between the European novel and its American counterpart, Lionel Trilling has pointed out the connection between love and politics in the thought of nineteenth-century Europe, particularly in the novel and the opera. The European idea of love depended upon the political and social passions, but there were no such clearly delineated passions in nineteenth-century America. Trilling concludes that the "idea of love is not interesting or even viable in literature unless some other idea is joined with it—empire, rule, class, property, marriage, etc."

Mr. Fiedler has come to his conclusions by way of several "sources of indebtedness" and a particular conception of the period and of the movement in which the novel arose and prospered.

THE FIRST of his sources is C. S. Lewis' *Allegory of Love* which taught him "the sense in which love is an invention and the poets its inventors"; secondly, he is indebted to certain Marxian critics for giving him a clue to the explanation for the shift in the nature of the villain in American fiction, for example the shift from a corrupt civilization to that of untamed nature; and then, to Freud and Jung he owes much of his basic vocabulary and many of his concepts. His last major source, of course, is D. H. Lawrence's *Studies in Classic American Literature* in which he found confirmation for his theory of the duplicity and outrageousness which determine the quality of the great American novels.

Fiedler's "sources" help us to understand better his notion of the Break-through, a term he finds more suitable than "Romanticism" to describe the series of events that includes both the American and French Revolutions, the arrival of the novel, the triumph of the lyric in poetry. For him the Break-through adds up to a psychic revolution as much as, if not more than, a social one. Indeed Fiedler goes on to say that the Break-through really means the invention of a new kind of self, a concept of inwardness; it is more like "the development of a new organ than the mere finding of a new way to describe old experience."

Certainly Lawrence sensed this in his reading of our

Mr. Curley, a frequent contributor, is a critic and the author of a forthcoming novel, *It's A Wise Child.*

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novels. He remarked that America, and not merely her novelists, refused the old patriarchal order of Europe. The colonists, Lawrence said, came to America not for religious freedom but for the simplest of reasons, to get away. Like Huck Finn, their disreputable descendant, they lit out for the territory. "Ca Ca Caliban. Get a new master, be a new man." Well, Americans never did get a new master. Hester Prynne never got a new husband or master; she became her own mistress, living alone with little Pearl on the outskirts of Boston; Ishmael had no master, the closest he came was Ahab, the mad Faustian father who is destroyed, whereas Ishmael ends up in the arms of the sorrowing Rachel. Americans are eternally boys, rebellious sons who may leave home or even kill the father but will never become fathers themselves. And if they cannot, in their own minds, become fathers they will not evince much enthusiasm for heterosexual love since a mature sexuality implies fatherhood, responsibility and the exercise of authority. Supposing that the normal sexual progress is from the polymorphous perverse play of the child, through Narcissism to a fully developed sexuality, it is as if the American imagination, rejecting the image of authority, which it took for oppression, chose the Narcissistic fate of death in contemplation of its own "heroic" likeness.

If I have been thinking and talking sex, it is not only because I am adopting Fiedler's terms; quite obviously, and literally, sexuality is the matrix of our affective life. And because sexuality is central, it is most difficult to talk or write about it. The very word "it" seems awry. And it is here that one has most serious trouble with Fiedler's study.

IMMEDIATELY after characterizing the Break-through as the development of a "new organ," Fiedler remarks that Diderot represented the first, and Freud the final, real awareness "that man is *double* to the final depths of his soul, the prey of conflicting psyches both equally himself." Presumably man is and always has been double; but if so, Diderot's and Freud's awareness are not activities of a new organ but rather new ways to describe old experience. Yet Fiedler argues just the contrary.

That, however, may be only a quibble. What is most troublesome is Fiedler's use of the Freudian vocabulary.

Not that he uses it but how. First, he places the novel squarely in the movement he calls the Break-through; then he uses the Freudian terms "ego" and "id" to describe the phenomena of the Break-through. For example, when Ishmael gazes at the armada of whales nursing in the depths of the Pacific, Fiedler speaks of the "life-giving immersion in the id." The question I want to ask is, did Ishmael come up with anything? Not, did it do him any good? but did Ishmael take anything from the id? Or is the id an eternal, imperishable sea which nourishes man without ever being depleted?

Such a question is not irrelevant. The new concept of inwardness which the novel exploited is a step towards what Marx called the socialization of man. "To carry the torch to the back of the cave," that is the work of the novelist. It is not so important that the novelist entered the cave, others had done that; but he brought a torch with him, thus revealing the human heart, not in a ritual, but in the bright light for all to see. Whether for entertainment or instruction, what had previously been hidden was now common. Known before only in private, it was now publicly recognized.

If love is most acceptably portrayed when allied with a public passion, then it is not strange that America, writer and reader both, came at it obliquely. A direct and imaginative treatment of the sexual life (clinical studies are impertinent) violates a cherished privacy. The torch carried to the back of the cave changes the cave itself. What is done in society—that is, where it can be seen by all—has no depth, for it does not arise and appear out of darkness as the child, for example, appears out of the womb. And if the bourgeoisie, by whom and for whom the novel is said to have been invented, resisted the torch bearers, it may have been because they instinctively wished to keep in darkness, so that it might grow unheeded, the unconscious, sexual life of the child. What I cannot accept is that Freud or Diderot or St. Augustine or St. Paul had the first real awareness that man is double to the final depths of his soul. Fiedler does not disagree. He admits the split had "always been felt" but would probably deny "real awareness" to anything short of articulation.

This brings us back to Lawrence who ranted against people who tried to know too much. Knowledge and being are incompatible, he said. Try to know too much and you'll kill your Holy Ghost (that is, Lawrence's version of the Holy Ghost). But nobody has paid him any heed. Man may be double to the depths of his soul, but our greatest novelists have never accepted that as his fate. The Dream of Reason may breed monsters but the dreaming has not stopped; it goes on all the time. And the name of one of those monsters is Unity. If thy eye be single, the whole body shall be lightsome.

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An Exchange of Views

"The Catholic Intellectual"

New York, N. Y.

TO THE EDITORS: There is so much to agree with in Daniel J. Callahan's sensitive and thoughtful article ["Alienation and Response," Apr. 8], that one hates to take issue with strands of his argument. Yet the kind of question he raises seems best furthered by response.

The Catholic intellectual now outside the ghetto stands in a No Man's Land—on the ruins of Warsaw, as it were. Behind is the ghetto, and of this Mr. Callahan has written well. Yet even here he does not seek the causes of the alienation between Catholic intellectual and Catholic community—causes not in some sociological, analytical sense, but in a therapeutic sense. The alienation of the Catholic intellectual is due in large part to a moderate contempt for the masses latent in the liberal tradition; the liberal is, after all, avant-garde and on the side of advancing liberty and justice. But it is due chiefly to the inability of the Catholic intellectual to communicate to the rest of the Catholic community; The Commonweal, *Jubilee, America,* these somehow do not express to the body of Catholic people the sense of the intellectual's unity of purpose with the older forms of the ghetto. The magazines do not seem to know how to express in simple terms the justification for intellectual advance and renewal. The common people somehow do not understand.

More exactly—to specify that *somehow*—there is a weak link in the chain. The sophistication of modern intellectual life is not reaching sisters, seminarians, and brothers, except perhaps those favored by a more or less open life on a university campus or by extraordinary teachers or intellectual contact. So long as these, the teachers of the Catholic community, remain intellectually isolated, incredibly unchallenged and complacent, there is no channel by which modern sophistication might reach the masses of the people, and perfect them according to the measure of our age. Convent and seminary libraries deserve a thorough examination for their depth, breadth, and range. Professors in the classroom must be allowed to be challenged, so that students in turn will allow questioning in their classrooms. Education without conflict and its flashing illuminations is useless.

On the other hand, Mr. Callahan is not so given to facing the other side of the No Man's Land: the ranks of the non-Catholic intellectual. Mr. Callahan does call for a Catholic contribution and vision. At the very moment he notes signs of this vision as nowhere in evidence, he explains the reason for not facing the non-Catholic intellectual scene. We have nothing to face it *with.*

Yet we do. The essential weakness in the present-day intellectual environment is the elusiveness of *freedom.* Secular humanism is adequate for destroying the ugly idols of overweening authority—the ghosts of Ibsen's play. But certainly in some brands of existentialism and Beatnikism, and in the general climate of creative literature, there is a pervasive underlying emptiness that is not freedom. It is as though men were saying: "We have destroyed the idols. Now what?" Nor is this emptiness a suitable ground for the bases of pluralism. *Ex nihilo nihil fit.* Anglo-American political leadership with no other appeal of the spirit than the ignoring of differences and an underlying emptiness will inspire few areas of the world.

A creative contribution to this environment must come as a vision of freedom, the kind of freedom that can ground pluralism, the kind of freedom God gives when he sends his rain on just and wicked indifferently, yet not for that reason dissolving the differences between them. This brings us to a second point. An intellectual vision in advance of what the current American scene now offers must present a *moral vision based on intelligence:* a vision of man, therefore, based on freedom and intelligence. For once the principle of convention has ceased to guide men, and once the principle of authority takes its rightful place as "the weakest of arguments," then the only way out of the nihilism of licence or eclecticism is the thread of intelligence. In our present-day society, "anything goes." There are few things on which all agree. Moral living therefore depends on individual and right use of intelligence. And this, perhaps, is as it should be—the imitation by pluralist society of the indetermination of intelligence given men by God, and by men of the search for perfection into which life throws them.

The Catholic has as good a chance as any of conceiving the moral vision of freedom and intelligence in which individual men of the future, and pluralist societies, too, can find sustenance. He may have a head start, if he will use it: he has such pointers as those of the Cardinal of Bologna in his recent address on Tolerance and Freedom. Catholics have come late to present-day conceptions of political and social liberties;

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but the future—and better—ones are yet unconceived.

Finally, I disagree strongly with Mr. Callahan's emulation of French and German Catholicism. True, Catholic intellectuals in Europe are even a leading part of European intellectual life; but are they any more in touch with the Catholic community? Do they not write beautiful books while the people starve? The Catholic ghetto of America has a thriving and energetic, even if woefully unsophisticated and narrow, life. I would not like to see it imitate Europe. A better course is the nourishing of our own kind of intellectual vision, and the opening of the channels whereby this vision might broaden and deepen the life of our people, Catholic and non-Catholic alike.

MICHAEL NOVAK.

REPLY

Cambridge, Mass.

TO THE EDITORS: On the whole, I think I will have to return Mr. Novak's opening compliment by saying that I agree with much of what he says and hate "to take issue with strands of his argument." On some minor points and on one major one I would, however, quibble. I was not, for instance, advocating an emulation of French and German Catholicism but simply pointing out that, as a matter of fact, American Catholic intellectuals do look to the continent for ideas and stimulation. It would certainly be better if we could rely more on our own work and develop our own vision; in the meantime we have to use what we can get and it just turns out that the quantity and quality of European work on matters of interest to Catholic intellectuals so far exceeds what is being done in this country that we have little choice.

We needn't emulate European visions and leanings but we ought certainly to emulate their intellectual vitality and productivity, their intellectual originality and boldness. Then too, I think they do reach the Catholic community. One has only to observe, in Germany for instance, the vital liturgical life, the brilliant catechisms, and the imaginative Church architecture to see that Catholic intellectuals have contributed greatly to Catholic life. Nor can I see any justification at all for saying, "Do they not write beautiful books while the people starve?" Surely the French Catholic intellectual has done his part in pushing the cause of social justice.

Next, some exception must be taken to Mr. Novak's statement that "The alienation of the Catholic intellectual is due in large part to a moderate contempt for the masses latent in the liberal tradition. . . ." I would agree that this contempt is latent: it must be since it isn't *visible*. It does, sadly, seem to me though that Mr. Novak has fallen into that trap prepared for the unwary when he identifies the Catholic intellectual (or the alienated Catholic intellectual?) with the liberal tradition. The trap has been laid by those Catholics who attempt to explain away any call for a more vigorous and effective intellectual life as a sign of the inroads of secularism and liberalism. While it might turn out statistically that many who would think of themselves as "Catholic intellectuals" would also think of themselves as "liberals" in some sense or other, the connection is, at most, accidental. Then again, if there was such a thing as an alienation crying-towel, liberal Catholic intellectuals would probably find that conservative Catholic intellectuals would fight them for the right to use it. Certainly those Catholics who characterize themselves as "conservatives" and spend their time mourning about the despotic power of the liberal establishment will have to wipe away their tears with something. At any rate, a ready explanation of Catholic weaknesses and failings on the grounds that all germs come from outside may serve romantic piety but not reality.

So much for the quibbles. What concerns me even more about Mr. Novak's letter is his call for a "vision of freedom" as an answer to the alienation of the Catholic intellectual. For some reason or other, possibly because this is an election year, the calls for vision are more than usually plentiful. Now no one can deny that grander and better visions are good things and that we need them today, or that a viable "vision of freedom" would be an immense contribution to the world. But such a vision will not necessarily do away with alienation; it might on the contrary increase it. I think it is necessary, to understand why I say this, to keep in mind the main point of my article. That point was that the alienation of the Catholic intellectual results from the difficulty he finds in gaining a full acceptance both in the popular American Catholic world and in the intellectual non-Catholic world.

Thus, should the Catholic intellectual come up with the kind of "vision of freedom" we do need, it is more than likely that he would run into considerable opposition from a great many within the Church who would think the old vision still valid and perfect. Should he, in addition, draw some of the elements of this vision from non-Catholic sources the chances are this would aggravate the opposition. One need only recall that many of the things that Cardinal Lercaro said in the address cited by Mr. Novak were said long ago by other Catholics who found themselves in considerable trouble for saying them. The fate of the visionary in the Church has not always been a happy one: the response to St. Thomas Aquinas' vision of a Christian philosophy which would make use of pagan truth, the difficulties of Cardinal Newman or, earlier, Lamennais, and, in our own day, Teilhard de Chardin, provide some famous examples.

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If we are going to issue calls for vision then I wish someone would call for a vision which would help the Church to cope with its prophets and visionaries; that they might be honored and assisted while alive rather than after they have died. To put the point another way, I wish it were more possible for the Catholic intellectual who has heeded the exhortations to take truth wherever it is found to be spared the condemnations and recriminations which often occur when he does just that.

As to the Catholic intellectual in the non-Catholic intellectual world, I can think of nothing more likely to cast doubt on his integrity than for him to go rushing in with a ready-made vision designed to solve everyone else's problems. We've had too much of this already. Indeed, the Catholic intellectual should have a vision and should attempt to communicate it. Let him, however, go into the non-Catholic intellectual world ready to take as much vision as he is so eager to give. Let him listen as much as he talks and, above all, let him be ready to modify his vision on the basis of truths he gains from others. Finally, let him beware of absolute visions which, while helpful in our times, may simply be yokes around the necks of some future generation of Catholic intellectuals.

DANIEL J. CALLAHAN.

THE SCREEN

DON'T MISS THE SCENERY

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON would have been pleased, I think, with the fine production that Walt Disney gave his "Kidnapped." Overlooking some of the changes that Disney's director-writer Robert Stevenson (a distant cousin) made in the script, the author of this famous novel set in eighteenth-century Scotland would have been excited by the picture's magnificent scenery and the fine cast who play the roles he created. Young James MacArthur is excellent as sturdy, somewhat puritanical David Balfour, who owes no man and fears no man and takes in stride the chain of events started by his wicked uncle who has him kidnapped by a villainous sea captain. If Peter Finch as Alan Breck Stewart seems to shine more brightly during the series of adventures on the coast and interior of Scotland, it is mainly because this role, coveted by actors through the years, is so flamboyant; and Finch makes the most of it as the dashing Prince-Charlie-man who hates the Campbells and King George's Redcoats and never loses his humor or bravado in the many arguments with his straight-laced, newfound friend. Capably assisting these two in their derring-do are Finlay Currie, Bernard Lee, Niall MacGinnis, John Laurie and many others as good and bad Scots.

Much of "Kidnapped" was photographed in the Scotch Highlands; and the spectacular scenery, with its hills and streams and fields of heather, couldn't be lovelier than it is in these handsome Technicolor shots. With its fights and flights, and bagpipes and swordplay, and lively, well-played characters enjoying every minute of the hazardous encounters, "Kidnapped" is a movie for adventure-seekers of all ages, whether they be Jacobites or Whigs.

I DON'T know how Boris Morros, who told the story of his switch from spying for the Russians to working for the American Central Bureau of Intelligence in *My Ten Years as a Counterspy*, feels about the movie made from part of his book, but "Man on a String" is a pretty exciting affair and Producer Louis de Rochemont has given it a documentary atmosphere that makes this modern cloak-and-dagger tale seem authentic. Under Andre de Toth's good direction, Ernest Borgnine plays Boris, the Russian-born Hollywood bigshot, as a sincere man who sees the error of his ways in cooperating with the Russian spies in this country and earnestly tries to make amends when approached by the C.B.I. His counterspying is by no means easy or safe, and he becomes indeed a man on a string in a series of episodes that grow more spine-tingling as they get closer and closer to Moscow and the goal of Boris's activities.

Borgnine, looking utterly unspylike, plays this important role well; and he is surrounded by a lively cast that includes Alexander Scourby, Colleen Dewhurst, Kerwin Mathews, Glenn Corbett and many others as Americans, Russians, Germans and various internationals involved in all this intrigue. Perhaps what gives this film its most authentic touch is its excellent black-and-white photography, done by a series of cameramen in the many locales—including Hollywood, New York, Berlin (West and East) and Moscow itself. Even if secret agentry isn't up your alley, the camera's tours in "Man on a String" should win you.

OR IF you prefer more flights of fancy in your travels, there's "Visit to a Small Planet," in which Jerry Lewis plays Kreton, a man from outer space who has a yen to visit Earth during the Civil War period. Like the Gore Vidal play on which all this nonsense is based, the movie is only mildly amusing. It gives Jerry Lewis an opportunity to carry on with his zany clowning, especially when he lands in Virginia in a Confederate uniform—to the astonishment of the Virginians, since Kreton miscalculated the year and the time is the present. Jerry is helped by an amusing cast, with Fred Clark as a very misinformed

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T.V. commentator, Joan Blackman as his daughter who falls for the off-beat spaceman, Earl Holliman as her jealous fiancé, Jerome Cowan as Clark's boss who will have none of this crazy space stuff, and several others as citizens of Virginia and the galaxy who take their planets in stride. Since Gore Vidal is a very amusing writer, he and the film's scriptwriters could have thought up some better jokes in their efforts to kid earthlings. But the film as a whole is rather ordinary. Jerry Lewis does come through in good style, and, as in the scene which kids beatniks, he's undeniably way out. PHILIP T. HARTUNG.

BOOKS

Dimensions of the Literary Imagination

CHRIST AND APOLLO. By William F. Lynch, S.J. Sheed and Ward. $5.

By JAMES FINN

IT IS EASIER to appraise *Christ and Apollo* than it is to describe it satisfactorily. For a single reading of the book reveals insights, questions, judgments, hypotheses which bear on the most profound concerns of the human person, which have ramifications far beyond the defined subject matter of the book.

In Father Lynch's disarming introduction he states that his book deals with "the question of that true and fundamental relevancy of the literary organism to reality." It is fair to say then that *Christ and Apollo* is another discussion of art and reality, but this is a misleading statement if it suggests that he is content to confine himself to the vocabulary, concepts and arguments which have grown wearisome and thin through the years.

For some time I have thought that one of the most helpful contemporary formulations concerning literary works was made by T. S. Eliot in his "Religion and Literature." It was in 1934 that he said: "The greatness of literature cannot be determined solely by literary standards; though we must remember that whether it is literature or not can be determined only by literary standards." There remains, in this formulation, the question of what constitutes literary standards, but it does acknowledge an autonomy that is proper to literature even as it stresses the relation of literature to other things.

Father Lynch would agree, I think, with those sentiments. But he also thinks that an important literary battle has come to an end. It is no longer necessary to assert that literature is not history or sociology, psychology, theology or any other discipline. Assuming that literature is itself and not another thing, he is most concerned to show how other dimensions, particularly the theological, operate *within* the literary fact. In the process of his exploration he examines "problems of time, of tragedy, of comedy, of creativity"; he postulates the existence of an imagination that can properly be termed Christian and he explores its relation to the Christian believer; he raises the question of an aesthetic orthodoxy (which does *not* mean an orthodox aesthetic).

In fairness to Father Lynch, who is committed to the definite and the limited, and to his ideas, which suffer much in summary, it may be well to examine in some detail a single aspect of his theme. He writes that "perhaps these men [Copernicus, Darwin, Freud] have done us an inestimable service by pushing us back on ourselves, our true selves and the true size of our concrete limitations. For there lies the real power. Not a romantic power which avoids the concretions in the name of unrooted dreams but the power of real being outside of and real self-identity inside the human person. These are the two pearls without price. These are the two things which I have proposed as the relevant objects of the literary imagination."

It is Apollo who represents the dream, the unrealistic escape into the infinite; it is Christ, "full of definiteness and actuality," Who has shown us the way of attainment by living through the event. On this basis Father Lynch shows how the real enters into the work of both theologian and artist. We are creatures of a space-time continuum. Our temporal being is not a weary, sagging frame which prevents the spirit from escaping, from transcending, the limitations of time and place. We achieve what we achieve by giving ourselves to and by working through time. The greatest artist will know this; the greatest art reflect it. "Art at its highest is never a dream world in which the protagonist seeks to escape from the meaning and consequences of time. Rather it is a highly conscious submission to a movement through the forms of time, even unto death (as with Christ) and a relentless search for insight into what happens to a human soul as it courses through event after event."

Throughout the book, but most carefully in the chapter on time, this idea is tested against the artistic works of, for example, Poe, Baudelaire, Dostoevsky, Proust and Eliot. Those who grasp this formulation can test it against other authors and other works than those examined here. Consider, for example Chance Wayne's concluding comments in Tennessee Williams' "Sweet Bird of Youth." "Time—who could beat it, who could defeat it ever? Maybe some saints and heroes, but not Chance Wayne. I lived on something, that—time?" And his final words as he turns to the audience: "I don't ask for your pity, but just for your understanding—not even that—no. Just for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in us all."

Tennessee Williams is, I think, the best dramatist writing for the American stage today, but these lines reveal a weakness which undermines even his strongest work. It is what he himself acknowledges

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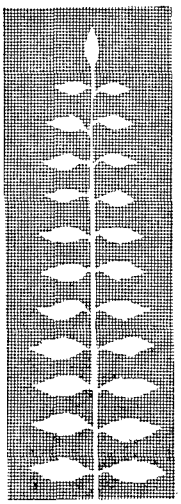

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to be a "shameless romanticism." But, as is usual, the acknowledgment is less an admission than a claim. It is a claim to see in man more than he now presents; it is a hope, an aspiration that he will become more than himself. This is a tempting concept; it is recurrent both in art and theology; and in the work of a talented artist it can be deeply moving. But it *is* shameless romanticism; it is an escape into the dream; it is an offense to the reality that is man himself. Under the guise of seeing man as greater than he appears, it makes him other and less than he now is. Under the illusion that it honors man by pointing to horizons not yet glimpsed, it refuses to honor that humanity which is firmly lodged in time and place.

"It is completely false to say that Christ redeemed time. For time has never needed redeeming; it only needed someone to explore its inner resources fully, as He did." A consideration of time has been a major preoccupation of twentieth-century artists. A comparison, in the light of Father Lynch's comments, of the way time is treated by artists like Proust, Gide, Mauriac, Eliot, Faulkner, Joyce and Williams, for example, will not only show how deep his comments penetrate, but it will also reveal the relative merits of these artists.

As Father Lynch moves on to discuss tragedy, comedy, the analogical, the theological and, finally, the Christian imagination, he continually reminds his readers of the "two pearls without price." But his thought does grow increasingly complex and increasingly speculative. (When I wished for greater clarity of style, as I did occasionally, I reminded myself of Kant's response to critics of his style. If, he said, you can express more simply what I am trying to say—well, do so.) And if Father Lynch is not always convincing, he never fails to be both provocative and persuasive.

I do not see how any sensitive person who is concerned with art can fail to learn, and learn much, from this book. It is not that *Christ and Apollo* offers answers to familiar questions. Although it does that, it does much more. It introduces new categories; it asks new questions; it relates the depths of our social and spiritual life to the concerns of the literary imagination. If this book gains the audience it deserves it may well change the course of literary studies.

The Corridors of Power

THE AFFAIR. By C. P. Snow. Scribner's. $4.50.

By JOSEPH P. CLANCY

LET ME say it at once: I believe C. P. Snow is the best living British novelist. It would be a pity if all the recent flurry over younger, admittedly talented writers should obscure for American readers his already solid achievement.

His series, *Strangers and Brothers,* reaches its eighth novel (there are three more to come) with *The Affair.* It is still too early to judge the sequence as a whole, but for those unfamiliar with the earlier units, a few things may be noted. First, any of the books, including the latest one, may be read independently. Second, the relationship among the novels is not primarily a chronological one: this is not a many-volumed chronicle. Many of the novels overlap in time; events that are tangential in one are central in another. Neither is this an experiment with points of view: the narrator of the entire sequence is Lewis Eliot, and each novel deals with an action in which he has been both participant and observer. "There is great dignity in being a spectator," Eliot observes in the present book, "and if you do it for long enough, you are dead inside. I knew that too well, for it was only by luck that I had escaped." Snow is, however, at his most impressive when he deals, as in *The Affair,* with situations where Eliot plays an

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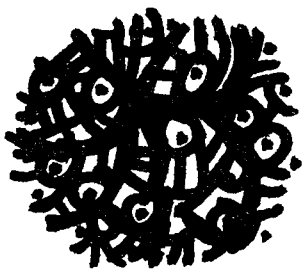

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active role but is not himself the center of events, and so can remain in part the spectator.

Lewis Eliot has "lived for a long time in the corridors of power," and each of the novels explores, so far as I can now see, some aspects of personal and social power, as men and women seek it, achieve or fail to achieve it, use it wisely or unwisely, comprehend or fail to comprehend what they do with it and what it does to them. Nothing as simple as "power corrupts" will summarize his work: in his novels, it is often the lack of power that warps otherwise good men, and it is sometimes the attainment of power that brings out a hidden goodness.

In *The Affair,* Eliot returns to the unnamed Cambridge college, the scene, set sixteen years earlier, of *The Masters.* The earlier novel had centered on the academic politics occasioned by the election of a new Master: the latest book concerns the possible injustice done to a young scientist removed from his fellowship for scientific fraud, the consequences of attempts to have his case retried before the Senior Fellows, and the eventual retrial itself.

As usual with Snow, nothing is simple here: the case is complicated by the sullen, unattractive, politically radical scientist who occasions it, by the lack of clear evidence on either side, by the personalities of all the Cambridge Fellows involved. As is also usual with Snow, the book moves slowly and without surface brilliance, gaining its strength from its trueness to the ways of men in society, particularly these men in this society. By the end it has created a world that holds one in a strong and patient grasp, in which every action seems inevitable but few are anticipated, in which the art is unobtrusive and the characters are never permitted to slip into caricature. Here, for example is Eliot's brother Martin:

"The nearer one was to him, the more often he seemed hard, selfish, cautious, calculating. With his wife, for instance, he was so inconsiderate that it could be harassing to be in their house. And he could not

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stop himself planning the next move ahead on the chessboard of power. . . . There was something else within him which made him a more interesting man. At its roots it might not be more amiable than those other roots which made him a hard self-seeker; but it certainly made him more surprising and more capable of good. It was something like a curious kind of self-regard. He knew as well as anyone else that he was hard, selfish, obsessively careful: but he knew, what no one else did, that he had sometimes wanted to be different from that."

It is not easy to represent Snow's work by quotation, and it is significant and misleading that the passages a critic tends to quote are expository. Significant, because Snow differs from his most famous predecessors in focussing on the intelligence, not on the subconscious, and on experience as it is weighed and sifted rather than on experience in process. Misleading, because such quotation suggests that all his strength is in reflection and ignores the firmness of his dramatic scenes and the perception and wit that have drawn, in the earlier novels, a provincial town, a wealthy Anglo-Jewish family, a community of atomic scientists, Cambridge in the thirties, and that now presents us with the Cambridge of the fifties, in which the middle-aged fellows are atheist and liberal and address each other by last names, in which the younger fellows address each other and their elders by first names, and tend to be devout and conservative. For those who have read *The Masters,* a special pleasure is to observe how some of the characters from the former novel, in particular Jago, Brown, Nightingale, Crawford, and the ancient, apparently immortal, eccentric Icelandic scholar, M. H. L. Gay, have come through the intervening years, and how they behave under the special stresses of the present situation.

At one point in *The Affair,* Eliot notes that "in terms of person-to-person conflict, when one moved from high affairs to the college one moved from a more sheltered life to a less." In this novel, as in the sequence as a whole, C. P. Snow is tough-minded, compassionate, always aware of the mystery of the persons involved in the politics. These are rare gifts in any novelist, and the ones which lay most claim to our attention and our applause.

Discovery Through Loss

THROUGH DOOMS OF LOVE. By Karl Stern. Farrar, Straus & Cudahy. $4.95.

By RICHARD HORCHLER

THE COBBLER should indeed stick to his last, but to what shall we limit Dr. Karl Stern?

He is a brilliant neuropathologist, whose flight from the Nazis brought to the New World the services of one of our times most eminent psychiatrists and psychiatric theorists. He is the author of *The Pillar of Fire* (1951), the extraordinary spiritual autobiography which became simultaneously a popular best seller and a permanent addition to the enduring literature of religious search. He is the delineator of what he called *The Third Revolution* (1954), that is, the rise of Orwellian "social engineering," after Nazism and Communism our century's most serious threat to the Christian concept of the human person. He is a frequent commentator on the dialogue between psychiatry and religion and on the broadest questions of science and culture.

Now, in his mid-fifties, psychiatrist-in-chief at St. Mary's Hospital in Montreal and professor of psychiatry at the University of Ottawa, Dr. Stern has written a big, ambitious novel. *Through Dooms of Love* is a story of love—its lack, its substitutes, its distortions and entanglements, and finally, on several levels, its fulfillment. The principal characters are old Leonhard Radbert, a Czech aristocrat fallen

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on hard times, and his daughter Marianne, a beautiful girl who is completely devoted to her pathetically dependent father.

When the Radbert family glass works in Bohemia were taken over by the Nazis, the family, with its fortune, was broken and scattered. Leonhard and Marianne have drifted somehow to Chicago, where they cling to their memories and each other, living on Marianne's earnings as a fashion model. Suddenly the old man suffers a stroke which results in a strange kind of "cerebral disturbance," and he is plunged into a terrifying round of pain and mental disorganization. An important part of the book details his experiences in Holy Jordan, a huge mental hospital on an island in Lake Michigan. Holy Jordan seems at first to be utterly unrelated to the life of the oblivious metropolis it serves, but as we come to know it we see that it is only another, more tragically stated version of the world of "normalcy."

The major part of the novel, however, is concerned with Marianne. The shattering experiences of her father's illness, his confinement in Holy Jordan and, as a gratuitous cruelty of fate, his accidental death, become too much for her to bear. Deranged by grief, she tries to lose herself in frenzied flight. She succeeds, in a way, and succeeds thereby in finding God and her true self.

The plot is barely sketched here. It is crowded with incidents, subplots and sub-sub-plots, and is, unfortunately, more than a little hackneyed. In fact, nearly everything in the book which pertains to the element of "story" is conventional and contrived. Marianne, her lover, her religious confidante, most of the characters, it must be said, are incredible and—what is worse—uninteresting. The dialogue, particularly that of the commercially and sexually predatory garment business, is often clumsy and unnatural. To put it harshly, the literary prototypes one thinks of are the never-land romances of the women's magazines.

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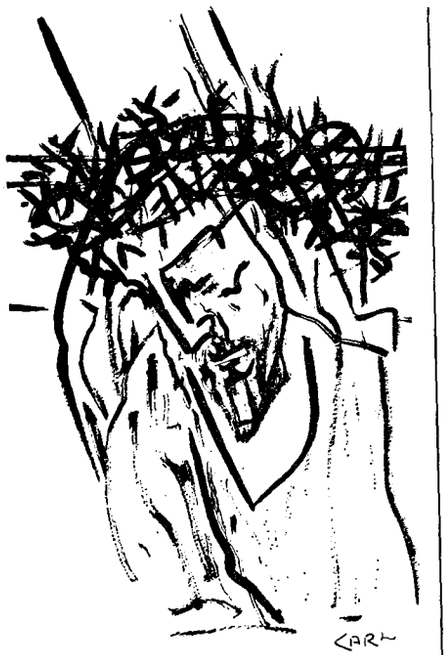

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in *Through Dooms of Love*. The "clinical" portions of the book—the representation of Leonhard Radbert's stroke, the projection of his mind in the throes of his mental illness, the consideration of various types and stages of mental sickness—these are triumphs of knowledge, sympathy and writing skill. The world of the mental institution—its people, its routines, its very feel—is as real and tangible in these pages as the Chicago *haut monde* of fashion is false. Beyond this, the reflections of the author on the interior aspects of love and loss are as wise and as subtle as his earlier works have led us to expect. It is hard to say which quality distinguishes them most—their sensitivity, insight or compassion.

On his own terrain, then, Dr. Stern is an unquestionably gifted writer, and his terrain includes not only psychiatry, in its widest and fullest sense, but the mystery of man in its profoundest spiritual dimensions. As his book is about love, so does it show forth, on almost every page, the love which animates its author.

Through Dooms of Love is a novel written, if one may make such a judgment, by a non-novelist. It fails in several respects, but it succeeds in being absorbing, enlightening and deeply moving.

New Traditions

GOLK. By Richard G. Stern. Criterion. $3.95.

By CHARLES MONAGHAN

LET'S DO away with book jackets. My objection isn't on practical grounds: it's simply that the space on the flaps reserved for printed commentary is too great a temptation for weak-willed enthusiasts in promotion departments. Consider, for instance: "*Golk* is an extraordinary novel. With its publication, Richard G. Stern becomes at once one of our most important novelists."

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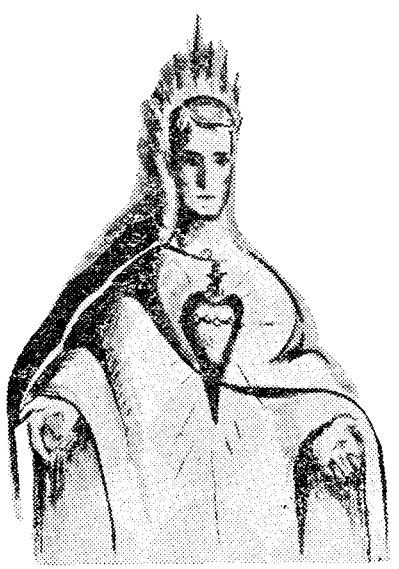

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a consistent and pleasant lightness of tone that never degenerates into frivolousness, for intriguing characterization and plotting, and for a clean and efficient prose style. These are admirable qualities, especially in a first novel; they shouldn't be obscured by excessive book jacket ballyhoo.

The novel's plot revolves around a television program, "You're On Camera," in which unsuspecting "victims" are captured in situations which illuminate their entire existence. Subjects are often lured into these revelatory scenes by the outlandishly disguised figure of Sidney Golk, the program's originator and mastermind. "You're On Camera" gains national fame when it exposes three prominent figures—an assistant to the President, a State Department official and a labor union racketeer. Golk becomes too hot for the network to handle and is replaced by two of his assistants, Herbert Hondorp and Jeanine Hendricks, who hallow their new eminence by commencing to live together. Deprived of Golk's peculiar genius and energy, the program fades into oblivion, and Hondorp and Hendricks—having separated—fade with it.

Mr. Stern, thank heaven, is not out to score easy points at the expense of television. He does indulge in some mild satire of network executives, but his main interest is in his central characters and their fates. Hondorp and Hendricks are themselves "victims" of "You're On Camera" before joining Golk. But both are also victims of their own backgrounds. Hondorp, though thirty-seven years old, never worked until meeting Golk, living in complete dependence on his father, while Hendricks is scarred by a lurid bohemian past. Both derive their new existence from Golk, and deprived of him, they return to mediocrity.

Their betrayal—accepting the chance to take over the program—is the key to their downfall. They fail not only in loyalty but in intelligence, not realizing how much the program is dependent on Golk's vision and dedication. Power—which spurs Golk on to better

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things—corrupts Hondorp and bores Hendricks.

The one weakness of the novel lies in its failure to provide complete characterizations of Golk, Hondorp and Hendricks. They have a modernistic attractiveness, all angles and edges, but they lack the full dimension which their key roles in the novel demand. Golk and Hondorp remain enigmas and Hendricks verges on being a cliché, a sort of American Brett Ashley.

Golk shares certain characteristics with some of the finest writing of recent times, especially that of Bellow, Nabokov, William Gaddis and J. P. Dunlevy. The one unifying fact about the world views of these writers seems to be that they are in revolt against the simplistic conception of man and his problems that has come down to us from the thirties. The dreary seriousness of the thirties' tradition is answered with lightness of tone and treatment; its emphasis on things political is countered by ignoring politics and concentrating on personal moral questions; and that tradition's black-and-white conception of human nature draws forth a spate of half-heroes whose goodness is mired in lust or pride.

Golk shares all of these characteristics. So light is the tone that the casual reader might be deceived into thinking that it is frivolous. It isn't. *Golk* is a short novel which brilliantly describes the effects of its leading characters on one another. If Mr. Stern learns to make these characters come fully alive in their own right, he will surely gain election to that select circle to which he is prematurely assigned by *Golk's* book jacket.

Another Time

D'ANNUNZIO. The Poet as Superman. By Anthony Rhodes. McDowell, Obolensky Inc. $4.95.

By SERGE HUGHES

THE awareness of change in moral climate—not, God willing, a minor consequence of the atomic

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age—ought at least to caution us when looking backward. The author of this account of D'Annunzio, however, does not care to recognize this change. 1960 notwithstanding, he writes of Italy and D'Annunzio with the confidence and insight of a Fascist writing on England and Oscar Wilde. The Fascists talked a great deal about peculiarly British characteristics, and Mr. Rhodes talks a lot about a peculiarly Italian way of justifying political immorality, a characteristically Italian idea of the privileges of the artist, an overwhelmingly melodramatic Italian race, etc.

Yet, in spite of his subject, Mr. Rhodes does not succumb to the fascination of either politics or literature. He is at his best in the recapitulation of the political adventures of D'Annunzio, but with a singular lack of prudence he offers a specific illustration of the greatness of D'Annunzio's poetry. It's embarrassing. Basically Mr. Rhodes' interest is in cultural history à la Hedda Hopper—the extent of D'Annunzio's wardrobe, his fear of railroad schedules, how he became bald, who went to bed with him on what night.

As frequently happens in this type of *Kulturgeschichte* there was a major frustration. Had the author been able to consult letters filled with the "audacious eroticism" of a senile but still unchanged D'Annunzio, he could really have felt a sense of mission accomplished. The letters, however, were not to be had. "Unfortunately not available," comments Mr. Rhodes, with typical British understatement, and the book remains what, unfortunately, it is.

REVIEWERS

James Finn is an associate editor of The Commonweal.

Joseph P. Clancy, a frequent contributor, has recently published a translation of *The Odes and Epodes of Horace*.

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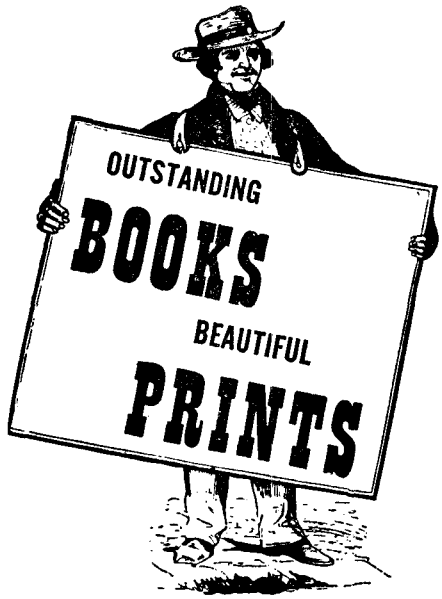

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